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NOV 5 1959

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'Publicity' For The CIA

OUR king-size hush-hush Government operation, the Central Intelligence Agency, made a mild bid the other day for public attention—for the first time.

The cornerstone for the CIA's plush new home, a 46-million-dollar structure outside Washington, was laid and the agency condescended to give out a few guarded facts: The building will have one million square feet of space, a 500-seat auditorium and a big cafeteria.

Until now, in its 13-year career, the CIA wouldn't give you the time of day. After the cornerstone was laid, it clammed up again. The nature of its business requires a pardonable, even commendable, devotion to secrecy.

But this giant agency still is a public affair, financed by tax money. Thus it ought to be accountable to the public, with limits. We don't want to know precisely what it is doing, but we are entitled to know on good authority whether it is doing its job well, whether however many dollars its spends are well spent.

Several years ago the Hoover Commission said the CIA was not as good as it should have been. The commission urged a congressional watchdog committee to keep tabs on CIA, a similar committee of private citizens to do likewise. Congress never acted.

President Eisenhower did appoint an eminent committee, but that's the last heard of it. There has been no known checkup since 1955.

DOCUMENT NO.

NO CHANGE IN CLASS ☐

CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C

NEXT REVIEW DATE:

AUTH: HR 70-2

DATE 28 APR 1981

REVIEWER: 029726